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The University of Dayton

News Release

Feb. 19, 1992
Contact: Dick Kubik

JFK ASSASSINATION NEEDS PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION

DAYTON, Ohio -- Current public interest in the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy once again shows that it is time for professional historians, not amateurs, to examine the tragedy, says a University of Dayton historian.

Larry Schweikart, associate professor of history at UD, also thinks the government files on the assassination should be opened to the public, adding "I would have opened them 15 years ago."

He says that "clearly there is a lot of substantial material in the files. Just the volume of material would serve to plug holes in our knowledge of what happened."

Schweikart would also like to see another hearing held, in which Kennedy family members and everyone connected with the tragedy would testify.

"Depositions from all of the critics of the original hearings might also be taken," he says.

Schweikart explains that for the most part what has been written about the assassination has been done by amateurs, some of whom have done good research but lack historical perspective.

Professional historians might be able to finally get to the truth and lay to rest many of the rumors that surround the assassination, he adds.

Meanwhile, a random sampling of students at the University showed that more than half those interviewed agree with Schweikart, believing all the files relating to the shooting should be opened to the public.

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As Jeffery Darling, a freshman from Clifton Springs, N.Y., said, "There's a possibility of a conspiracy, and I think that the only way to find out would be to open the files."

Tim Toth, a senior from Cleveland, was even more emphatic, saying, "There was a conspiracy...Lee Harvey Oswald didn't act alone. The files should be opened, too. That deadline that Congress set...who cares?"

But Dave Afton, a senior from Brookville, Pa., said, "I think there was definitely a conspiracy...but I don't think the files should be opened until the 75 years are up. There's no point in opening them now; the American public will go crazy, they'll be upset for no particular reason."

Mary Pat Nally, a sophomore from Canton, Ohio, observed that "It's over...the files should not be opened. It doesn't matter anymore whether or not there was a conspiracy."

Sounding a somewhat pessimistic note, Jim Morey, a senior from Cleveland, said, "Even if they do open the files, I don't know if everyone would believe them anyway."

And perhaps Mary Ann Diemer, another senior from Cleveland, delivered the last word when she said, "Maybe they should open the files, but I don't know how important that is anyway. There are so many things going on in the United States today anyway, I just don't know how important it is that we dwell on a death that happened so long ago."